



# Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ January 2017

## ★ From the Director



The start of a new year is always an exciting time as we prepare for the new opportunities – and also new challenges – facing our department. Our 72nd year as your Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs promises to be another year of positive impact, as we continue to grow and meet the needs of our Illinois Veteran Community.

A major milestone in the past year was the completion of a new Water Treatment Plant at the IDVA Veterans' Home in Quincy, Illinois. This state of the art facility will help ensure our residents and staff are receiving the highest quality water possible. Additionally, we put water management plans in place at all of our homes statewide to ensure that every resident of our Homes is getting the highest quality care.

In FY 2016 we provided many employment workshops with hope that our Illinois heroes would enjoy networking while receiving substantive material that can help with employment, entrepreneurship, resume building and more. We also took the time to remember the brave men and women who gave their all for Desert Storm; and we also paused to honor all Pearl Harbor survivors and paid tribute to the more than 2,400 Americans who lost their lives on that very dark day.

Finally, it's fitting to start this year off by highlighting our most mission critical IDVA success story – the staff and volunteers who make up our "IDVA Family." Our team is the key to all the successes we achieve.

**Thank you to each one of you! I look forward to this New Year as we work to meet our Veteran's needs and to celebrate new successes in 2017.**

**Erica Jeffries**

*Director, Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs*

Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to "Stand Up and Be Counted!" by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you're helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. [Click here to register.](#)

**We Thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to You.**

## ★ Lynn Brown - FY17 Employee of the Quarter

VSO Lynn Brown has served the veteran community in Effingham, Illinois and surrounding counties for over 26 years. During his lengthy term of service, he has become known as the ultimate 'go to' guy for all things 'Veteran'. He is well known by fellow VSOs of his vast knowledge of both the Federal and State programs, entitlements and benefits. He is also a very charitable man, spending a great deal of his personal time involved with veteran organizations and creating awareness of the IDVA to veterans in attendance.



You will find Lynn at the American Legion Baseball Team fundraiser grilling hot dogs and burgers or at a VFW benefits program for veteran widows and children. And many people have been touched by his 'professional hobby' of creating shadow boxes filled with appropriate medals, campaign ribbons, service awards, along with a photo of the Veteran. And all these beautiful gifts were created at his own expense. Congratulations Mr. Lynn Brown, your exemplary personal code has not only met, but exceeded the IDVA's mission of empowering veterans and their families to thrive in our great state!

*Honorable mentions go to*

**Marcus Johnson-IT, Art Brown-Nursing, Lisa Wand-Human Resources, Sue Horton-Housekeeping, Tanya Wolf-Nursing**

**Congratulations to All!**

## ★ 2017 Illinois New Laws

*Eric Murphy, our Legislative Liaison lists the new Illinois laws pertaining to our Illinois heroes, all are Effective January 1, 2017:*

### **Illinois Code of Military Justice Update**

*(SB 2861/PA 99-0796)* Creates an appeal process for ICMJ court martials, by adopting procedures from the Model State Code of Military Justice which is modeled after the UCMJ.

### **Military Family Care Plan**

*(HB 4327/PA 99-0599)* Allows a parent who is on active military duty to appoint a short term guardian for their child and allows that guardianship to last up to thirty (30) days after the end of the parent's active duty.

### **Heroes Way Designation Program**

*(HB 4344/PA 99-0802)* Creates the Heroes Way Designation Program Act and allows the family of Veteran's who were killed in action while on active duty to apply for a designation that would allow the placement of an honorary sign on roadways under the jurisdiction of IDOT.

### **DCFS Abuse Report of a Service Member**

*(HB 4425/PA 99-0638)* Requires the Department of Children and Family Services to determine the military status of each parent or guardian who is named as the alleged perpetrator in a child abuse or neglect report. Sets forth several guidelines.

### **Student Musicians at Military Funerals**

*(HB 4432/PA 99-0804)* Permits a child in grades 6 through 12 to be excused from a public school when absent

from class for the purpose of playing taps at a military funeral in Illinois for a deceased veteran.

### **Military License Plates Transfer**

*(HB 4433/PA 99-0805)* Allows the surviving spouse of a deceased military service member to retain the special license plates if he/she is a resident of Illinois and if the transfer takes place within 180 days of the death of the service member.

### **Veteran License Plate Reclassification**

*(HB 5402/PA 99-0809)* States that individuals who qualify for the military specialty plates may reclassify their standard plate registration without paying replacement fees or the registration sticker cost.

### **National Guard Discrimination**

*(HB 5756/PA 99-0557)* Provides that there shall be no unlawful discrimination in the Illinois National Guard and brings the Guard's policies in-line with federal standards and guidelines.

### **Uranium Testing**

*(HB 6123/PA 99-0719)* Requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide non-monetary assistance to any resident of Illinois who served in active duty in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait or Qatar with any component of the U.S. Armed Forces, including the Illinois National Guard, who requests a pre-deployment or post-deployment test for depleted uranium in accessing federal resources for pre-deployment and post-deployment testing for depleted uranium.



## ★ New Employee

**Michael T. Ragan** started as the new Veterans Service Officer in Peoria this past November. Michael served his country in the U.S. Navy from 1986 to 2006. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Workforce Education Development from Southern Illinois University. Prior to working for the state, he retired from the U.S. Navy where he served on the Admirals staff for Naval Service Training Command. He was also a former Navy recruiter and former corporate recruiter. Michael worked for the IDES from February of 2011 as an Employment Service Program Representative and accepted the position of VSO last year. He resides in the Peoria area.

**Crystal Womack** is the Assistant to Director Erica Jeffries. She has a 17 year history working in the administration field including a previous position at the American Heart Association for 10 years. She and her husband Eric, who is a Marine, have 1 son, Billy who is going to be a diesel mechanic and graduating college this March. Crystal is thrilled to be working with a department that is close to her heart.

**Jill Nation** joined IDVA as an Account Technician II in the Fiscal Department, working mainly with Procurement. Jill was with the Department of Corrections, Lincoln Correctional Center where she was an Account Tech. I in the Business Office and later to be named an Executive Secretary for the Assistant Wardens. She and her husband Tony for 26 years have 2 children. A daughter who is a nurse in the St. Louis area and a son in the IL Air National Guard and attending the University of IL at Springfield.

**Connie Sabo** joined the staff January 1, 2017 as the Chief Fiscal Officer. She has extensive state accounting experience having held positions at Teachers' Retirement System, Office of the Comptroller, Children and Family Services, Military Affairs, Healthcare and Family Services and Department of Innovation and Technology. Connie is excited to be part of the DVA team and looking forward to working with everyone to benefit Illinois Veterans.

## ★ IDVA Calendar

- 1/16 Martin Luther King Day** – *State Office Closed*  
**1/17 Veteran Town Hall - VFW Post 630** – *Urbana*  
**1/31-2/01 2017 Pork Expo** -  
**Veterans in Agriculture** – *Springfield*  
**2/13 Lincoln's Birthday** – *State Office Closed*  
**2/20 Presidents' Day** – *State Office Closed*  
**2/28 Desert Shield/Desert Storm**  
**Remembrance Event** – *State Capitol Rotunda*

## ★ Did You Know?

There are many ways you can find out more about the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs

**IDVA website**

[www.illinois.gov/veterans](http://www.illinois.gov/veterans)

**Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs](https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs)

**Twitter**

<https://twitter.com/ILVetsAffairs>

**LinkedIn**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/il-dva>

## ★ IDVA is Hiring!

We have several positions open throughout the State of Illinois. If you go to our website [www.illinois.gov/veterans](http://www.illinois.gov/veterans) and click on IDVA employment, you will find all the positions available in our department. If you are interested in applying for a RN position, please contact the Veteran Home closest to you or our Central Office in Springfield. Click here for contact information for our HR office at each location - <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/IDVAEmployment/Pages/HR-Contacts.aspx>



State of Illinois  
Department of Veterans' Affairs



Illinois Department of  
Veterans' Affairs